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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to collect information related to Future Farmers of America (FFA) advisors, chapters, and school characteristics. Specific objectives were to determine FFA activities influenced by the advisor's experience, and to identify factors perceived as contributing to the preparation of teachers for the role of advisor and to the enrollment of students in agricultural education. A total of 120 FFA advisors randomly selected from 6 southern states were mailed a questionnaire. Data were obtained from 68 teachers, a 57 percent return. The findings and conclusions of the study included the following: (1) chapters with advisors who had more than 10 years of advisor experience were more likely to be involved in a wider variety of FFA activities; (2) chapter advisors with 1-10 years of advisor experience participated more in fund-raising activities, opportunities for students to seek office beyond the local level, cooperative efforts with other school organizations, active advisory councils, and national conventions; (3) participation in FFA in high school appeared to be a fundamental factor that contributed to the preparation of teachers for the role of advisor; and (4) enrollment patterns in agricultural education were influenced by public recognition of programs and students, lack of public understanding about agricultural education, and selection of electives other than agriculture. The study confirmed the worth of FFA activities in agricultural education. (KC)

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FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA

A Profile Of Chapters and Advisors

The education reform movement that began with the release of the report " A Nation At Risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) has generated a number of suggestions for improving the quality of public education. These reports stressed that because our educational system is falling behind those of other counties, our economy and our national security are in danger. The contents of these reports have prompted actions which increase the need for vocational agriculture programs to be strong, viable, and exciting enough to maintain administrative community support.

Future Farmers Of America provides one potential avenue for strengthening a vocational agriculture program in several ways: It is a vital part of the American's systems of public education. Its role in training people for successful experience in agriculture occupations is unparalleled. But equally important is its role in training young people in good citizenship, cooperation, and leadership that makes our communities clicks (Nations Tops....1966). Many students want and need these "grass roots" opportunities according to a report by the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (1984), "The problem and possibilities in vocational education mirrors those in academic education. In both cases, learning is compartmentalized into arbitrary pockets called "courses". Students are seldom asked and seldom expected to integrate skills and knowledge across these courses (p.13)". As for members, students have the opportunity to participate in chapter projects that can integrate skills and knowledge across courses. Though leadership, agriscience and international programs are strong, FFA membership and enrollment have provided the organization with a major challenge. Overall, the 1980's have shown a 16% decrease in FFA

membership. Many factors have contributed to this decline, including a decrease in the total student population and few students from production agriculture backgrounds (Harris and Sprick, 1989).

Zurbrick (1989) in his editorial introduction on leadership development made the following comments: "On more than one occasion a beginning teacher has told me that he/she did not have time to worry about conducting a FFA program. One teacher suggested that there was too much technical subject matter in agriculture and mechanization to "waste time" with a student club. Another said, "Don't give me the "company line". I was trained to teach, not babysit kids after school in some school club". In every case the beginning teacher either quickly changed their mind, or in one case failed to finish the year".

A study by Herren (1984) found that FFA teams with advisors having fewer years of advisor experience tended to score higher. This factor was indicated by a -.23 correlation between years of vocational agriculture teaching experience and contest team score. Herren (1984) concluded that this factor could be due to the more recent training received by the less experienced advisors.

Purpose and Objectives

This study was designed to collect information related to advisors, chapters, and school characteristics.

Specific objectives of the study were:

1. To determine FFA activities by advisors' experience.
2. To identify factors that were perceived as contributing to the preparation of teachers for the role of advisor.
3. To identify factors that were perceived by advisors as having an influence on enrollment of students in agricultural education.
4. To determine agricultural education enrollment and affiliated FFA membership as perceived by advisors.

Procedures

Population and Sample

The target population was FFA advisors (agricultural education teachers) in the southern region. For this study, a total of 120 FFA advisors were randomly selected from six southern states: Alabama, Tennessee, Texas, Kentucky, North Carolina and South Carolina. Frame and selection errors were controlled by utilizing an accurate, up to date list of FFA advisors from the Executive Secretary of the FFA for each state, from which the random sample was drawn. Twenty teachers from each state were selected from those listed in the up to date list of FFA advisors.

Instrumentation

A researcher - designed questionnaire was developed to obtain information which described the enrollment and location of the school, the teaching and FFA advising experiences of the teachers, the affiliation status of the FFA chapters, and types of FFA experiences provided during 1984 through 1989. In addition, teachers were asked to identify factors which influenced agricultural education enrollment patterns in their school. A cover letter accompanied the questionnaire. The cover letter included a brief introduction of the study, purpose of the study, and a statement of confidentiality, and how the responses would provide important data. Content validity was determined by using a panel of experts, suggestions for improvement were incorporated into the final questionnaire.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected by a mailed questionnaire. Each of the 120 randomly selected FFA advisors (agricultural education teachers) was mailed a copy of the questionnaire with instruction for responding; a stamped, self-addressed

envelope; and a deadline date for returning the complete questionnaire. The first mailing of the questionnaire was sent February 13, 1990. The second mailing was sent on March 5, 1990.

Non-response bias was controlled by comparing late to early respondents (Miller & Smith, 1983, and Goode & Hatt, 1952). There was no significant differences between the two groups. Data were obtained from 68 teachers, which constituted a 57% return. Lin (1976) reported that a 50% response rate is normal for questionnaire surveys and that this return is adequate for drawing inferences from the data. Descriptive statistics and the Harvard Graphics package (1987), were used to analyze the data.

Findings

School Characteristic

Harvard Graphics package was used to create a pie graph, showing the location of participating schools. The majority (68%) of the schools were located in suburban areas as indicated by figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 here

Approximately one-fourth (25%) of the schools were located in rural areas. The remaining schools (7%) were located in urban areas.

Twenty eight percent (19) of the schools reported a total enrollment ranging from 200-599 students; 26% (18) of the schools reported a total enrollment ranging from 600-999 students; and 46% reported a total enrollment of 1,000 or more students.

Nine percent (6) of the FFA advisors indicated that they had an inactive chapter at their school.

Sample Characteristics

The numbers of years respondents had taught agricultural education, ranged from 2-33 years. Most of these teachers (74%) taught more than 10 years. The teachers responding had an average of 16 years of teaching experience. The number of years respondents had advised an FFA chapter ranged from 1 to 33 years. Most of the advisors had served in that capacity more than 10 years. The chapter advisors had an average of 15 years of advising experience.

Chapter Activities

Eighty seven percent (59) of the respondents indicated that FFA organizational activities were co-curricular. Advisors indicated that a variety of activities was conducted by the FFA chapters. The most frequently reported activity by advisors with 1-10 years experience and those with more than ten years of experience was judging contests, (see table 1).

Insert Table 1 here

As indicated in table 1 the experience of the advisor had an effect on the types of FFA activities provided in the chapters. Seventy four percent (14) of the activities listed were provided more often in chapters with advisors who had more than ten years of experience. However, chapters with advisors who had 1 to 10 years experience participated more in the following activities: (a) money making activities/fund raisers, (b) opportunities for student to seek/hold office beyond local level, (c) cooperative efforts with other school organizations, (d) active advisory council, and (e) attended national convention. The greatest variation, as indicated by table 1, was the "invitation of former FFA members to discuss the importance of Scholarship". Twenty eight percent (5) of the advisors with 1-10 years advisory experience and 56% (28) of those with more than 10 years experience responded to this activity.

Preparation for the Role of Advisor

Table 2 revealed that the majority (78%) of the advisors with 1 to 10 years of teaching experience indicated that the factor contributing most to their preparation for the role of advisor was their agricultural education student teaching program. More than half of the 18 advisors with 1 to 10 years of teaching experience indicated that they received preparation for the role of advisor from participation in the FFA at the junior or senior high school level, undergraduate agricultural education methods class(es) and experience in the role of advisor.

Insert Table 2

Eighty two percent (41%) the advisors with more than 10 years of teaching experience indicated that experience in the role of advisor had prepared them to be advisors. Participation in FFA at the junior or senior high school level also was selected by 80% as a factor which had prepared them for the role of advisor.

Positive and negative factors which have influenced enrollment patterns in agricultural education is presented in table 3.

Insert Table 3 Here

Ninety percent or more of the FFA advisors indicated the following as the most positive factors influencing enrollment patterns in agricultural education: (a) public recognition of existing program and students, (b) public recognition of FFA activities and members accomplishments, (c) increase in female enrollment in agricultural education programs. More than 50% of the FFA advisors in this study indicated that the existence of an FFA chapter, support of parents and attitude of the administration toward agricultural education were also positive factors which influenced enrollment in agricultural education.

Students selecting other elective courses, reduction in the number of electives

for graduation, and lack of public understanding about agricultural education were considered negative factors for agricultural enrollment by 90% and over of the FFA advisors. Over 50% (37) of the FFA advisors indicated the influence of the school guidance counselor(s) as a negative factor contributing to agricultural education enrollment.

Harvard Graphics package was used to create a horizontal bar graph (figure 2) to show the distribution of the average enrollment in agricultural education and FFA membership, since 1985 to 1989 as perceived by FFA advisors in this study. The average enrollment for agricultural education was stable for most years as indicated by figure 2. Overall most agricultural education students were affiliated with the FFA organization.

Insert Figure 2 here.

The highest average enrollment for FFA was 98 for the year 1987. As revealed by figure 2, FFA average enrollment decreased gradually after 1987 from 98 to 93, which represented a 5.01% decrease rate.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Chapters with advisors who had more than ten years of advisor experience, were more likely to be involved in conducting a wider variety of FFA activities.
2. Chapter advisors with 1-10 years advisor experience participated and provided more in the following activities: money making activities/fund raises, opportunities for student to seek/hold office beyond local level, cooperative efforts with other school organization, active advisory council and attended national convention. This was probably due to their agricultural student teaching and undergraduate agricultural education methods class(es) which prepared them for the role of advisor.
3. Participation in the FFA at the junior or senior high school level, appeared

to be a fundamental factor which contributed to the preparation of teachers for the role of advisor.

4. Enrollment patterns in agricultural education was more likely to be influenced by the following: public recognition of existing program and students, lack of public understanding about agricultural education, and selection of other elective courses other than agricultural education.
5. The decrease in FFA membership from 1988-1989 was probably due to the location of the participating schools. The majority (46) of the schools were located in suburban areas, which probably composed of few students from agricultural background.

Implications and Recommendations

Findings supported the notion that FFA is an integral (co-curricular) part of agricultural education. Eighty seven percent of the chapters responding used this approach. FFA extended learning in these chapters through many types of activities, but the activities conducted most often were those which contributed to judging contests. It is very possible that through these activities an FFA chapter could be a vital force in promoting enrollment in agricultural education.

Fund raising activity was provided by more than 90% of the chapter advisors. This supported the fact that financial support for education is not often adequate for conducting an agricultural education program and an FFA chapter. Because fund raising is an activity often used in the FFA organization, it is important that the experience be made an educational one. It should be noted that invitation of former FFA members to discuss the importance of Scholarship was the activity least often provided in the schools. It is suggested that chapters advisors invite former FFA members to discuss the importance of Scholarship. This could provide a positive role model image for present and prospective FFA

members.

The fact that inservice training was not selected as one of the most helpful factor by those teachers with 1 to 10 years experience and those with more than 10 years teaching experience, suggests that teacher educators may need to examine the approach they are using to present Future Farmers of America to undergraduate education majors. Responses of teachers/advisors revealed that actual participation provides greater learning. Is there a way to incorporate more participation in FFA activities in teacher education programs, or do we let teachers lean to be advisors after they become advisors?

Advisors who had more experience had greater chapter participating in most activities. This difference in participation might be due to a greater confidence and awareness of FFA activities by advisors with more experience. The findings suggested questions for those who serve as FFA advisors and those who work with these advisors. If students are learning as members how to be advisors, are we providing role models of the advisors we want them to be? Are teacher education programs providing meaningful experiences in Future Farmers of America for students? Are FFA activities planned to promote learning, and do students see theses activities as educational activities?

Future Farmers of America has the potential to expand an agricultural education program in a positive manner. Careful analysis of the questions above, as well as other questions raised by this study, can aid in strengthening agricultural education in public schools through Future Farmers of America.

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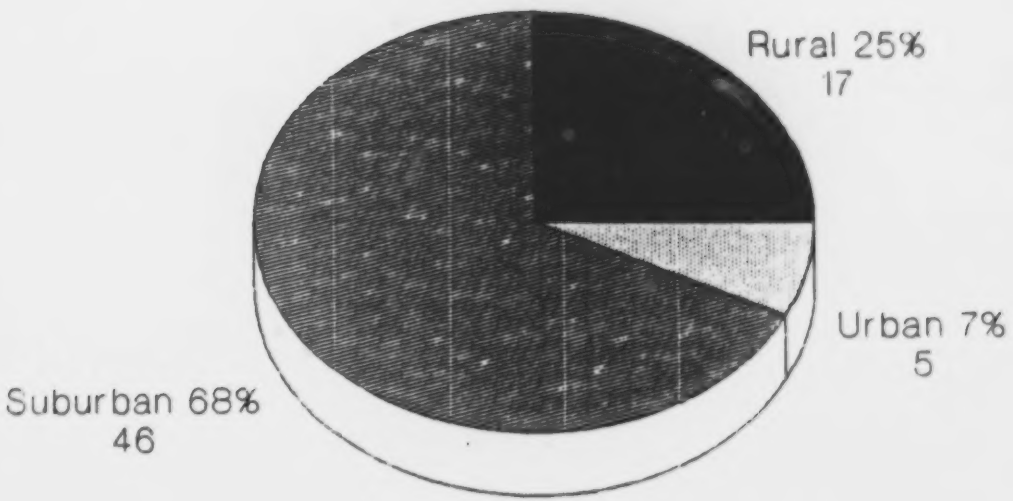
FIGURE 1

Location of Participating Schools
For Southern Locations



Sample - 68

Table 1

FFA Activities By Advisors' Experience

* Activity	Advisors' Experience	
	1 - 10 yrs. (N) = 18	More than 10 yrs. (N) = 50
Judging contests.	94% (17)	96% (48)
Money making activities/fund raisers.	94% (17)	92% (46)
Attended state convention.	89% (16)	94% (47)
Parliamentary procedure/leadership training.	83% (15)	94% (47)
Publicize FFA activities.	83% (15)	90% (45)
Advisor visit S.A.E. 's.	78% (14)	84% (42)
Opportunities for student to seek/hold office beyond local level.	78% (14)	76% (38)
Cooperative efforts with other school organizations.	78% (14)	72% (36)
Members apply for state FFA degree.	72% (13)	80% (40)
Hold meeting monthly.	72% (13)	86% (43)
Meetings beyond local schools such as district, regional, state and national.	72% (13)	84% (42)
Safety Program.	72% (13)	76% (38)
Active advisory council.	72% (13)	64% (32)
Recognition and awards banquet.	67% (12)	80% (40)
Attended national convention.	67% (12)	64% (32)
Building our American communities program.	61% (11)	62% (31)
Field plots demonstration.	61% (11)	64% (32)
Most members have S.O.E.P.	50% (9)	66% (33)
Invited former members to discuss importance of Scholarship.	28% (5)	56% (28)

*Other reported activities - Field trips to local businesses.
- Use of community leaders to promote Agricultural Education.
- Cooperation with Young Farmer Program.

Table 2

Factors Perceived As Contributing To The Preparation Of Teachers For The Role Of Advisor

Factor	Years of Teaching Experience	
	1 - 10 yrs. (N) = 18	More than 10 yrs. (N) = 50
Agricultural Education student teaching.	78% (14)	58% (29)
Participation in the FFA at the junior or senior high school level.	67% (12)	80% (40)
Undergraduate Agricultural Education methods class(es).	61% (11)	48% (24)
Experience in the role of advisor.	61% (11)	82% (41)
In-service Training.	28% (5)	46% (23)
Graduate course on FFA organization.	22% (4)	30% (15)

Table 3

Positive and Negative Factors Which Have Influenced Enrollment Patterns In Agricultural Education As Perceived By Advisors (N=68)

* Positive Factor	N	%	** Negative Factor	N	%
Public recognition of existing program and students.	66	97	Students selecting other elective courses.	62	91
Public recognition of FFA activities and member accomplishments.	65	96	Reduction in the number of electives for graduation.	61	90
Increase in female enrollment in Agricultural Education programs.	64	94	Lack of public understanding about Agricultural Education.	61	90
The existence of an FFA Chapter.	58	85	Decrease in number of Agricultural Education teachers as a result of budget cuts.	60	88
Support of parents.	55	80	Increase high school graduation requirements.	54	79
Attitude of the administration toward Agricultural Education.	51	75	Emphasis on "basics" in the high school curriculum.	49	72
Semester courses in Agricultural Education.	46	68	Influence of the school guidance counselor(s).	37	54
Attitude of other faculty members.	37	54			
Attitude of students.	36	53			

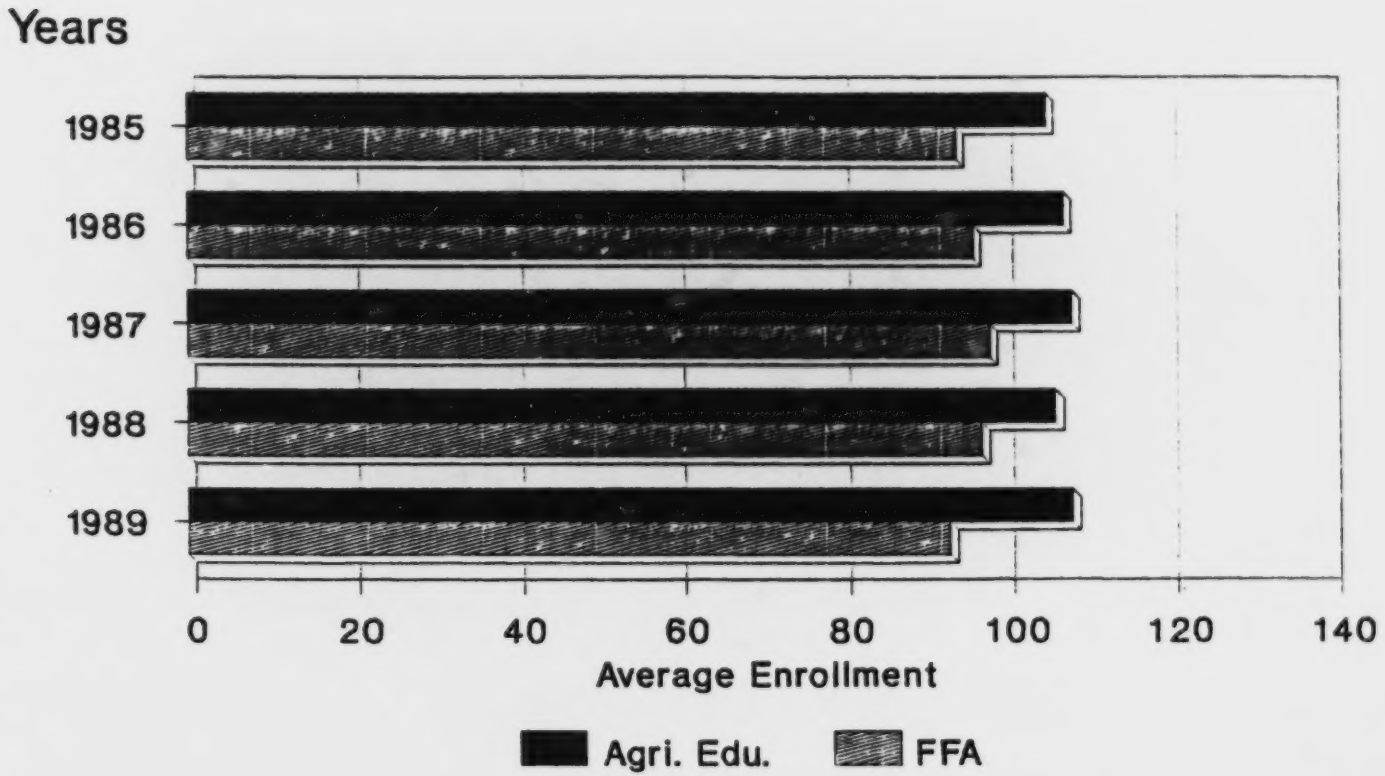
* Support of Young Farmer Program and FFA Alumni.

** College town (urban) and virtually no parents have been Agricultural Education students.

Anti-vocational attitude by existing School Board.

FIGURE 2

Average Enrollment In Agricultural Education & FFA Membership



Sample - 68

APPENDIX

Please return by February 23, 1990

QUESTIONNAIRE - FFA: A PROFILE OF CHAPTERS AND ADVISORS

Directions: **Please provide the following information.** Answer every question or statement, giving only one answer for each.

_____ 1. Approximately how many students in grades 7-12 attend the school at which you teach?

_____ 2. Which of these best describes your school setting?

a. Urban — Serving a city of 50,000 or more with the school population residing within the city limits.
b. Suburban — The school population draws students from the suburban and rural areas.
c. Rural — All students living in rural areas on farms. Farms are defined as places from which sales of crops, livestock, and other farm products amounted to $1,000 or more.

_____ 3. How many years have you taught Agricultural Education?

_____ 4. Are you currently serving as an FFA Advisor?
(1) yes
(2) no

_____ 5. How many years have you served as an FFA Advisor?

_____ 6. Which statement best describes the FFA Chapter in your school?

a. There is an active, affiliated chapter in this school.
b. There is an inactive, affiliated chapter in this school.

_____ 7. Which of the following best describes the degree to which you are integrating the FFA organization into the Agricultural Education curriculum?

1. All FFA activities are conducted within the Agricultural Education.
2. FFA activities are conducted within the Agricultural Education class and out of the class.
3. FFA activities are conducted outside of the Agricultural Education class.

Directions: Please indicate as accurately as possible the responses to the following:

1. Of the total number of teachers employed each year in this school, indicate the number who served as FFA Advisors.

School Years	Agricultural Education Teachers (Number)	FFA Advisors (Number)
1984 - 1985	_____	_____
1985 - 1986	_____	_____
1986 - 1987	_____	_____
1987 - 1988	_____	_____
1988 - 1989	_____	_____

2. Circle the number corresponding to the area(s) which prepared you for the role of FFA Advisor.

1. Participation in the FFA at the junior or senior high school level.
2. Undergraduate Agricultural Education methods class(es).
3. Agricultural Education student teaching.
4. Experience in the role of advisor.
5. Inservice training.
6. Graduate course on FFA organization
7. None of the above.
8. Other: Specify _____

_____

3. Circle the number corresponding to the factor(s) which have influenced total enrollment patterns in Agricultural Education in this school. In the blank to the left of each factor, place a (+) sign if the influence has been positive or a (-) minus sign if the influence has been negative.

_____ 1. The existence of an FFA Chapter.
_____ 2. Semester courses in Agricultural Education.
_____ 3. Increased high school graduation requirements.
_____ 4. Emphasis on "basics" in the high school curriculum.
_____ 5. Decrease in number of Agricultural Education teachers as a result of budget cuts.
_____ 6. Increase in number of Agricultural Education teachers.
_____ 7. Students selecting other elective courses.
_____ 8. Public recognition of existing program and students.
_____ 9. Public recognition of FFA activities and member accomplishments.
_____ 10. Influence of the school guidance counselor(s).
_____ 11. Attitude of the administration toward Agricultural Education.
_____ 12. Reduction in the number of electives for graduation.
_____ 13. Increase in female enrollment in Agricultural Education programs.
_____ 14. Lack of public understanding about Agricultural Education.
_____ 15. Attitude of students.
_____ 16. Attitude of other faculty members.
_____ 17. Support of parents.
_____ 18. Other: Specify _____

_____

4. Circle the number(s) corresponding to the FFA activities/experiences provided in this school during the past five years.

_____ 1. Parliamentary procedure/leadership training
_____ 2. Safety Program
_____ 3. Money making adtivities
_____ 4. Attended state convention
_____ 5. Attended national convention
_____ 6. Publicize FFA activities
_____ 7. FFA included in instruction

_____ 8. Building our American communities program
_____ 9. Judging contests
_____ 10. Recognition and awards banquets
_____ 11. Meetings beyond local schools such as district regional state, and national
_____ 12. Opportunities for students to seek/hold office beyond local level
_____ 13. Cooperative efforts with other school orgainzations
_____ 14. Field plots/demonstrations
_____ 15. All members have supervised agricultural experience programs
_____ 16. Advisor visit S.A.E.'s
_____ 17. Active advisory council
_____ 18. Members apply for state FFA degree
_____ 19. Hold meeting monthly
_____ 20. Invited former members to discuss importance of scholarship
_____ 21. Other: Specify _____
_____

5. Circle the number(s) corresponding to the benefits which students receive from FFA.

1. Making new friends
2. Leaning new skills in Agricultural Education
3. Fun with friends
4. Satisfaction with being involved
5. Inproving self confidence
6. Improving leadership ability
7. Satisfaction in helping people
8. Meeting people of different ages, races and backgrounds
9. Traveling and seeing new things
10. Learning or improving organizational skills
11. Positive relationship with advisor
12. Finding a career
13. None

6. For your school, indicate the total Agricultural Education enrollment and the total affiliated FFA membership for the five year period below.

Years	Total Agricultural Education Enrollment	Total Affiliated FFA Membership
1984-1985	_____	_____
1985-1986	_____	_____
1986-1987	_____	_____
1987-1988	_____	_____
1988-1989	_____	_____

Please return by February 23, 1990.

FLORIDA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE
FRED H. KENT CAMPUS
3939 ROOSEVELT BOULEVARD
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32205 - 8999

February 8, 1990

Dear Selected FFA Teacher Advisors:

Your school has been randomly selected to participate in this study for the southern region.

The purpose of this study is to collect information related to the advisor, chapter, and school characteristics. Specifically, this study is designed to:

1. Identify FFA activities by advisors' experience.

2. Identify factors perceived as contributing to the preparation of teachers for the role of advisors.

Responses of participants will be kept confidential and will be reported only as aggregates.

A summary of the results will be available to all participants and agencies requesting them. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study please print your name and address on the back of the enclosed return envelope (NOT on this questionnaire).

Thank you for your time and help with this study. Please remove this cover sheet from the attached forms prior to returning the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Howard R. Gordon

Howard R. Gordon
Professor, Floral Design and Marketing

HRG/tz

P.S. Your State FFA advisor served as a member of the review panel for this questionnaire.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action College in Education and Employment

FLORIDA COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE
FRED H. KENT CAMPUS
3939 ROOSEVELT BOULEVARD
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32205 - 8999

March 9, 1990

Dear Selected FFA Teacher Advisors:

Do you recall receiving a questionnaire which was mailed to you during the latter part of February? This questionnaire consist of the data I need to do my research project.

Please help me. If you have not already done so, fill out the questionnaire and return it to me, the stamp is supplied.

I need your help. Without your questionnaire I do not have sufficient data to analyze for some categories. Please take the time to answer this questionnaire and put it in the mail today.

Sincerely,

Howard R. Gordon

Howard R. Gordon
Professor, Floral Design and Marketing

HRG/tz

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